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REPORT OF THE EXPERT-LEVEL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING AFRICAN LDCs

Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,
from 27 to 29 March 2000

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

1. In its resolution 52/187 of 18 December 1997, the General Assembly decided to convene the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-III) at a high level in the year 2001 to assess the results of the Programme of Action during the 1990s at the country level; to review the implementation of international support measures, particularly in the areas of official development assistance, debt, investment and trade; and to consider the formulation and adoption of appropriate national and international policies and measures for sustainable development of the least developed countries and their progressive integration into the world economy. The General Assembly accepted the offer of the European Union to host the Conference, which will be held in Brussels during the period 13 to 20 May 2001.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly decided to convene the meeting of the Intergovernmental Preparatory Committee (IPC) in two parts, to be preceded by three expert-level preparatory meetings (one for English-speaking African LDCs, one for French-speaking African LDCs and the Americas, and one for Asian and Pacific LDCs). Pursuant to this resolution, the Expert-level Preparatory Meeting for the English-speaking African LDCs was held in Addis Ababa during the period 27-29 March 2000.

3. The main objective of this Meeting was to undertake a review of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s, as well as to provide substantive inputs to the country-level preparatory process and on the main issues to be addressed by the IPC meetings and the Conference itself.

4. The Meeting was attended by participants from the following nine countries: Burundi, Ethiopia, Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. The following United Nations offices and bodies were represented at the Meeting: Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the LDCs; UNDP; and UNECA. The following specialized agencies were represented: ILO and WIPO. The following intergovernmental organizations were also represented: OAU/AEC; the European Commission; and the Common Fund for Commodities.

5. The Meeting was opened and addressed by H.E. Mr. Mekonnen Manyazewal, Vice Minister, Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation, Ethiopia. The Vice Minister reviewed the implementation of the past two Programmes of Action for the Least Developed Countries adopted in 1981 and 1990 respectively. He noted the dismal performance of the two Programmes of Action in addressing the fundamental development problems of the LDCs. For example, the number of LDCs increased from 31 in the early 1980s to 48 in the 1990s. Weak domestic capacities remain key impediments to international competitiveness, which has become critical in a globalizing world economy. In addition, the overall external environment has remained difficult. In particular, world commodity markets in terms of prices and access have been unstable, and official development assistance has sharply declined. The external debt burden has worsened, thus compromising adjustment and development efforts. He suggested that the Meeting should seek answers to the following core issues:

- Commodity dependence and export instability;
- Problem of access to international markets;
- Problem of attracting FDI;
- The decline of official development assistance;
- Continued difficulties with external debt and lack of progress in implementing debt reduction measures.

6. Other statements at the opening session were made by the following: Ms. Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, Executive Secretary, Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries; Mr. Samuel Nyambi, Resident Coordinator, Addis Ababa; Mr. J. Thisen, OIC, ESPD, ECA; Mr. Etim Akpan, Director, EDECO, OAU; Mr. Francisco Granell, Chief, Adviser, European Commission; Ms. Yvette Stevens, Special Coordinator for Africa and LDCs (OSCAL), United Nations, New York.

7. The meeting elected Mr. Mohamed Djemel, Chairman, National Preparatory Committee for LDC III in Ethiopia and Mr. Vincent Mayiga, Principal Commercial Officer, Uganda as Chairman and as Rapporteur of the Meeting respectively.

I. REVIEW OF PROGRESS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR THE 1990s

A. Global level

8. In considering this item, the meeting had before it the 1999 Least Developed Countries Report, which included a chapter on a preliminary assessment of progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Meeting also took note of the Plan of Action of UNCTAD X as it relates to this issue (TD/386).

9. The Meeting felt that the Programme of Action had failed to address the development problems of LDCs and to deliver the desired results. In this connection, the Meeting noted the failure to meet the ODA target of 0.15 per cent of donor's GNP and the Programme's deficiency in respect of consultative mechanisms with development partners, essential for resource mobilization. Another major shortcoming was the inability to translate the global programme into action programmes at the country level that were amenable to implementation. In addition, implementation was further complicated by the ongoing processes of globalization and liberalization and by the many uncoordinated policies and strategies that were pursued under different cooperation programmes with development partners.

B. Country level

10. The Meeting noted that, at the national level, the development of African LDCs has continued to be constrained by shortcomings in physical infrastructure and human resources

development, low levels of domestic resource mobilization, shortcomings in macroeconomic policy design and management, and severe socio-economic consequences of local or regional conflicts. In addition, keeping the countries' ownership of the development agenda remained one of the most difficult challenges in the 1990s as a result of the implementation of various reform initiatives associated with external assistance. Countries devoted disproportionate efforts to economic reform to attain macroeconomic stability at the expense of long-term structural transformation of their economies.

C. Regional level

11. The Meeting considered that national-level programmes had not given sufficient attention to regional cooperation aspects. In this respect, the potential impact of regional integration and multinational projects on national development was not fully realized. Well-articulated strategies to link national development and regional integration efforts are needed. The discussion on regional integration further stressed the need to give due consideration to the role of regional economic communities (RECs) as building blocks in the process of achieving the objective of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community. External support for this process has been weak and needs to be strengthened, especially with regard to institutional mechanisms for managing integration. The LDCs ought to be given flexibility so as to cope with the adverse effects of liberalization as they participate in integration arrangements with stronger economies and in multilateral rules governing integration.

12. The LDCs can also considerably facilitate the course of integration through actions that allow wider participation of the population in advancing the objectives of RECs. In this way the integration process will be seen as a truly community undertaking and not merely the business of Governments. On the other hand, members of RECs have to judge the costs and benefits of participating in different integration groups with a view to rationalizing the overlapping objectives of these bodies, which is essential to ensure cohesiveness and unity of purpose. In this vein, recognition was given to the need to reconcile the narrow concept of national borders and sovereignty with the wider political and economic objectives underpinning the establishment of the African Economic Community and to bridge the gap between the two.

13. In view of the disappointing results of the implementation of the Programme of Action, the Meeting was of the view that it should be a matter of priority to examine in a comprehensive manner the reasons for the failure of past efforts by both the LDCs and their development partners to address the critical development problems facing LDCs. Such an examination is critical if the new Programme of Action to be adopted by LDC-III is not to face the same fate as the previous Programmes. In this respect, the Meeting welcomed the plans of the Conference secretariat to establish a high-level evaluation team for this purpose.

II. COUNTRY-LEVEL PREPARATIONS AND PRESENTATION OF GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

14. After presentation of draft guidelines by the secretariat, participants discussed various aspects pertaining to the content of the guidelines. Clarifications were also given on a number of issues. It was, for instance, made clear that some of the deadlines, in particular the meeting of

the IPC, indicated in the Guidelines had been fixed by the United Nations General Assembly and therefore imply that the preparation of the national action programmes has to be completed on time.

15. In this context, the Executive Secretary of the Conference appealed to the countries which had not yet done so to accelerate the process of recruiting the national resource persons and setting up the National Preparatory Committees (NPCs). It was observed that in many countries most basic documents relevant to the action programmes already exist. Nonetheless, the information in these documents will need to be recast to reflect the requirements of the guidelines and to cover the period of 10 years. A good example of existing documents is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper that is under preparation in several LDCs.

16. The meeting was informed that the EU representatives and the UNDP coordinators had been requested by their respective capitals and headquarters to facilitate the work of preparation of the action programmes at the national level. They had in their great majority shown extraordinary cooperation on this matter. Nonetheless, the secretariat would continue to sensitize them and would intensify contacts with the NPCs and the resource persons to ensure that the action programmes were finalized on time.

III. FINANCING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICAN LDCs

A. General discussions

17. A special presentation was made on this subject, followed by participant's discussions. The presentation paper raises key pertinent issues that could form the Agenda of the Brussels Conference.

18. The paper on "Financing development in African LDCs" was enthusiastically received, as it provided an in-depth analysis of sub-Saharan Africa financing and development problems. It raised fundamental questions about the development strategies embraced hitherto and the financing mechanism applied. It was considered to be a thought-provoking piece that perhaps should be developed into one of the major theme papers of the Brussels Conference in May 2001.

19. It was observed that the overall results of about 50 years of development finance, with special attention focused on Africa and the LDCs, are disappointing. Only Botswana has graduated from the category of LDCs, while the number of African LDCs has increased. Real per capita income for a median LDC was lower in 1999 than in 1979, and poverty has remained pervasive and severe. And the burden of debt has grown heavier. All this has happened despite a series of reforms. African resource needs for development are therefore enormous. Yet external aid has fallen by 24 per cent in the 1990s, and the future of ODA is not too bright. In the meantime, the international relations framework is changing fast, with globalization and liberalization adding more strains. The Meeting agreed that the nature of development financing cannot remain the same, in view of all these changes and the intensifying development constraints.

20. One of the topics of the discussion was the leakages which economies are undergoing. The following leakages were highlighted:

- Terms-of-trade losses offsetting 70 per cent of ODA
- Loss of market shares: $68 bn. p.a. during 1970-1997
- Debt service averaging 19 per cent of exports
- Capital flight estimated at $225 billion (1980-1992)
- The brain drain: 30,000 p.a. compounded by HIV/AIDS.

21. It was clear at the meeting that several "big push" efforts such as the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD), the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), Special Programmes of Assistance (SPAs) and even the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative have largely failed or have not yet fully achieved their objectives. It was pointed out that deep-rooted structural traps have remained intractable and do not respond to "quick fixes". These problems may include geographical and demographical problems, poor institutional set-ups, ethnic tensions (18 African LDCs have been involved in armed conflicts since independence) and weak, often dualistic, product markets. A number of LDCs have also suffered from recurring natural disasters.

22. As for the financing mechanisms that have been applied and the "big-push" rubric cited above, they have been judged either inadequate or inappropriate. Low domestic saving ratios have been common in most African LDCs. Development aid has been overloaded with many conditionalities that adversely affect its disbursement and use. The Meeting noted that about 40 per cent of aid is used for technical assistance and 30 per cent for humanitarian assistance, thus leaving 30 per cent only devoted to development. The need to improve aid management effectiveness was emphasized.

23. In order to make aid work better than in the past, the following were suggested:

- Continue to improve the policy environment so as to attract new investment, both domestic and foreign, as a supplement to ODA.
- Address countries' indebtedness more seriously by embarking on outright debt cancellation.
- Allow countries to choose their own priorities vis-à-vis programmes to combat poverty.

- Address the fundamental traps of economies, especially structural vulnerability, to emphasize, for example, diversification of the production structure and export competitiveness.

- Focus attention on regional and subregional markets.

24. The Meeting underlined the fact that even with increased external aid, which is vital, sufficient attention should be paid to domestic resource mobilization. Other important measures should address the capital flight and brain drain issues.

25. The Meeting cautioned against paying exclusive attention to reducing poverty without giving equal or even initial priority focus to enhancing high growth. This question has profound implications in terms of what aid finances and calls for careful analysis so as to prioritize and set proper sequencing of programmes for deploying the limited resources that a specific country is likely to receive. In most African LDCs, perhaps a major judicious use of aid could be primarily to invest in making existing capacities more productive (i.e. roads, irrigation schemes, factories etc.).

26. It was argued that this approach could explain the high growth rates that countries like Uganda, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and Rwanda attained in the 1990s. Their economies are recovering and thus rising from lower levels of growth to reach their former capacity utilization frontiers. However, as these frontiers are reached, moving to higher frontiers becomes more difficult and requires larger and new types of infusion of finance, as well as rearranged priorities with regard to what mobilized resources can finance.

27. As to the question of tackling the unemployment problem as part of the battle against poverty, the discussion concluded that it is indeed possible to address the need for creating employment, including labour-intensive jobs, while at the same time aiming to achieve high growth rates in the economy. It is not realistic to assume that in an environment of massive poverty and unemployment, the creation of labour-intensive jobs can be sustained over a long period if the economy is not expanding fast enough.

28. During the discussions on the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda case studies, two points were emphasized: (a) sustained high growth rates in an economy cannot be realized without substantial transformation of the economy and sufficient injection of external resources; (b) eradication of poverty and growth are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but growth is a prerequisite for poverty reduction.

B. Suggestions

29. In concluding the discussions on the subject of financing development in African LDCs, the Meeting summarized the issues and suggestions that could form the agenda for restructuring development finance in the future as follows:

- Intensify the reforms to render domestic economies more attractive to investment, including the inducement of the return of flight capital and attracting substantial FDI.

- Undertake further institutional and policy reforms to mobilize domestic savings and raise government revenue.

- Eliminate waste in government spending.

- Diversify production and particularly expand exports and reverse the loss in global market shares.

- Devise special programmes to deal with the flight of capital.

- Pool regional resources to produce substantial synergies and the economies of scale that are provided in a large market.

- Carry out reforms to refine the principles underlying aid delivery by enhancing ownership, selectivity, participation and partnership.

- Above all, increase ODA in real terms by benefiting from the fiscal and growth boom in developed countries, by sharing the peace dividend, and by cancelling debt.

- Supplement aid with unconditional access to OECD markets.

IV. TRADE ISSUES, MARKET ACCESS AND SUPPLY CAPACITY OF AFRICAN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

30. The discussions on this subject were based on a background paper on "Trade issues, market access and supply capacity of the least developed countries". The issues discussed fell under the following headings:

- Demand-side constraints affecting exports of African LDCs.

- Supply-side constraints affecting trade and competitiveness of African LDCs.

31. In introducing the background paper, the consultant concerned highlighted the fact that the poor trade performance of LDCs in global trade in the last two decades is a reflection of supply- and demand-side constraints affecting their trade and competitiveness and made recommendations in this regard.

A. Demand-side constraints

32. During the discussions, the Meeting noted that several factors contribute to the poor participation of LDCs in international trade and hamper their beneficial integration into the global economy. The Meeting noted that while removing supply bottlenecks is critical,

improved market access conditions can impart strong impetus to this effort. In this context, the meeting stressed that bound, duty-free and quota-free market access for all products originating in the LDCs will provide a significant and predictable trade environment in global markets which could inspire investor confidence and hence boost productive investment in the LDCs.

33. The Meeting further noted that a number of LDCs have experienced market access problems, as shown by country-specific presentations made during the discussions. These specific cases were indicative of the uncertainty and unpredictable nature of barriers affecting exports of African LDCs which invariably lead not only to loss of customers but also to law investor confidence and hence reduced export revenue and even closure of production units in affected LDCs. The Meeting noted in this connection the cases cited by Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania with respect to invocation of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS) by the European Union against exports of fish and fish products which were found not justified on scientific grounds and had to be withdrawn. Similar cases were cited in connection with the imposition of SPS on exports of live animals by Ethiopia and on exports of shrimps from Madagascar. Fruits, vegetables and other food exports from many LDCs have suffered a similar fate in major destination markets. Protectionist environmental measures and technical standards have also negatively affected exports from LDCs. LDCs' non-participation in international standard-setting bodies due to limited human and financial resources was also viewed as a disadvantage. Contingency protection measures in the form of anti-dumping duties, though not yet widely applied to LDCs, have affected textile exports from one LDC so far, and thus there are no guarantees that similar measures will not be applied to LDCs in the future, especially when their market share or competitive strength improves.

34. The Meeting highlighted other equally important measures that affected export demand in global markets, such as the rules of origin of preferential schemes, which were too complex and therefore have not only hampered their optimum utilization and market access opportunities but also industrialization of the LDCs.

35. The Meeting viewed the above measures to be inconsistent with the international community's declared commitment to integrating the LDCs into the global economy and reflected policy incoherence on the part of LDCs development partners towards efforts to achieve this objective.

B. Supply-side constraints

36. The Meeting underscored that the LDCs' poor performance in world trade is a result of their weak productive capacity and competitiveness resulting from a host of structural and other supply-side constraints. The Meeting noted that public policy in LDCs plays an important role in addressing supply-side constraints. Macro-economic policies, in particular stability and predictability, are essential in this respect, but sectoral and micro or firm level policies are also necessary to facilitate the development and sustain the competitiveness of productive capacity in specific sectors. The analysis and policy measures included in the 1999 Least Developed Countries Report, were considered of particular importance in this regard.

37. The Meeting further stressed that the ultimate solution to the problem of low productive capacity and competitiveness in LDCs lies in the structural transformation of LDC economies. Enduring transformation requires the creation of integrated national economies characterized by increased specialization and growing interdependence among sectors. It is such a transformation that will create linkages between industry and agriculture, and thus engender efficient and diversified production and exports and increase the manufacturing value-added of LDC export trade. LDCs and their development partners need to focus attention and resources on those areas that will enhance the internal linkages and therefore the integration of LDC economic sectors.

38. The Meeting benefited from intensive discussions and also from the country experiences of Uganda and Ethiopia and agreed that a number of factors contribute to the critical supply constraints and weak export competitiveness of LDCs:

39. At the national level, the following factors were identified:

- Poor physical infrastructure
- Unstable and unpredictable macroeconomic policy conditions
- Undiversified export structure
- Low domestic savings
- Low technological and IT capacities
- Lack of access to credit
- Low investment in utilities, water, electricity and telecommunications
- Absence of a trade policy framework supportive of competitiveness
- Under-utilization of installed production capacity due to outdated production facilities
- Inadequate human resources development (health, education).

40. With regard to factors at the regional level, the Meeting recognized that strengthening regional trade arrangements is not an option but a necessity in the efforts of the African LDCs to gradually integrate into the global economy. However, the Meeting also recognized that the share of intra-African trade in LDCs' total trade is still insignificant. This is due to the fact that African LDCs to a large measure produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce. There is, however, a great potential to increase LDCs' trade not only in goods but also in services. This is a prerequisite for making progress in liberalizing the movement of natural persons and capital in order to exploit economies of scale and expanding regional markets. It is important that multilateral trade rules governing regional trading agreements are supportive of regional integration efforts and provide flexibility to African LDCs in adjusting to

more competitive trade regimes under these arrangements. Supply of foreign markets could also be promoted on a regional basis through regional bodies, as is being done in CARICOM under the CARICOM Export Development Agency (CEDA).

41. The Meeting noted that the ACP Group is in the process of establishing, with the support of European Union, an office in Geneva to provide support to the ACP member States in trade negotiations in the WTO.

42. At the global level, the following factors were identified as major constraints:

- The debt burden, which constitutes a bottleneck for supply capacity building
- Lack of technology transfer, the importance of which has been recognized in the TRIPs Agreement (Art. 66.2)
- Policy incoherence in both national policies of development partners and policies of multilateral and international financial institutions, e.g. trade measures, debt relief measures and multilateral trade rules.

C. Suggestions

43. The following sum up the main suggestions arising from the discussions:

- Guaranteed, secure and predictable market access by means of bound, duty-free and quota-free entry for all products originating in the LDCs.
- Policy coherence on the part of development partners in their responses to the market access and supply capacity concerns of LDCs.
- Adoption by LDCs of trade policy frameworks in the context of both regional and global opportunities and constraints.
- Creation of conducive macroeconomic conditions to overcome supply-side constraints.
- Intensified support for LDCs' efforts to diversify their export structure and export markets through horizontal and vertical diversification of their commodity exports and market development.
- The need for regional cooperation among LDCs in developing capacity to meet sanitary, phytosanitary and other standards and requirements, as well as technical assistance for the LDCs in terms of both equipment and training to cope with conformity and risk assessment procedures to meet these requirements.
- Giving the Integrated Framework for Trade-related technical Assistance for LDCs new impetus to achieve its objectives.

- Due emphasis on issues such as transfer of technology, intellectual property protection for traditional knowledge and folklore and other cultural goods and services, including geographical indications, as well as the problem of net food-importing developing countries in WTO trade negotiations, taking into account the LDCs' proposals already submitted to the WTO.

- Intensification of support for building capacity in LDCs to undertake multilateral trade negotiations and ensuring adequate representation in WTO.

- The need for multilateral trade rules governing regional trade arrangements to be supportive of regional integration efforts and adequate flexibility for the African LDCs in adjusting to more liberalized and competitive trade regimes under these arrangements.

- The need for WTO to facilitate accession to WTO of LDCs seeking to accede without asking them to assume obligations or commitments that go beyond what is applicable to existing WTO LDC members.

V. GOOD GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL SERVICES DELIVERY AND GENDER ISSUES

A. Good governance

44. The Meeting reviewed the question of good governance from the democratic and economic management perspectives, in the context of sustained growth and sustainable development in African LDCs and within the broader context of a number of global, structural, institutional and socio-cultural factors. It was observed that governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. It includes policy ownership, the right to development, sound economic management, and accountability and transparency in public affairs, among others. Although there is no empirical evidence directly linking economic development and social progress to democratic governance, there was convergence that political and policy stability, underpinned by institutions of democratic governance and appropriate external environment, can contribute to improved socio-economic performance.

45. The democratic transitions under way in several African LDCs are aimed at creating democratic institutions, plurality of the political system, public sector reform and participation in economic and political processes by marginalized groups such as women and civil society. The prospects for the consolidation and sustainability of the transitions could be undermined unless accompanied by increased resource flows and general improvement of the external economic environment. Moreover, it is also recognized that economic growth cannot be sustained on a long-term basis without focusing on poverty reduction and equitable distribution of the benefits from growth.

46. The Meeting noted the proposals made in the background paper on these issues.

B. Social services delivery

47. The Meeting noted that, in Africa in general and LDCs in particular, the state of social services is still characterized by large-scale deprivation, particularly in rural areas, which account for more than 75 per cent of the total population. Only 36 per cent of rural children of primary school age are enrolled in primary education and only 37 per cent are literate. Access to sanitation and piped water is limited to 45 per cent and 19 per cent of the rural population respectively.

48. One of the reasons for the high incidence of human deprivation in Africa is the low capacity of the public sector to provide resources for the social sectors and utilize them efficiently. According to ECA, on average an African country spent, in 1999, only 3.6 per cent of its GDP on education and 1.6 per cent on health. It is therefore obvious that significant investment in the social sector is required. Implementation of the commitments of the Copenhagen Summit for African countries should entail a substantial increase in public resources to expand education and health services. This is even more urgent in the case of war-torn countries, which require substantial assistance to accelerate the reconstruction process. Given the resource constraints, Governments may have to devise ways and means, including reallocation, of enhancing the efficiency of resources devoted to education and health services. It can be inferred from the evidence on the state of human deprivation and the efficiency of public resources that the social goals set at the Copenhagen Summit are beyond the means of LDCs, given the low rate of growth in their overall economy. LDCs therefore have to look for additional sources of funding in order to realize these goals.

49. Some countries have made efforts to fulfil the 20/20 Initiative in respect of Basic Social Services. However, donors in particular are lagging behind in providing 20 per cent of their ODA in support of social services. Accordingly, greater efforts should be made to meet the goals of the 20/20 Initiative in respect of Basic Social Services.

C. Women's participation in development

50. The Meeting emphasized the importance of appropriate measures to fully mobilize and involve women, both as agents and beneficiaries of the development process. The Meeting noted also that, since the first International Conference on Women in 1975, several approaches have been adopted to raise the world's consciousness of women's needs and concerns on the global development agenda. The need to assist women by integrating them into the development process was until recently tackled through the approach known as "Women in Development", through which actions were undertaken nationally and internationally to propel women into the productive sector. That approach, which was characterized as a "remedial approach", does not seem to have succeeded in improving drastically the conditions of women in the world and in particular LDCs, as women continued to be marginalized.

51. That approach and emphasis are being changed to that of mainstreaming. This means integrating women into all spheres and areas of economic, social and political life, leading to a shift in emphasis to gender and development. This, unlike the previous approach, seeks to base interventions on the analysis of women's and men's roles and needs in an effort to improve women's position in ways that will benefit and transform society as a whole.

52. The Meeting noted the measures being undertaken by ECA in this area.

CLOSING OF THE MEETING

53. At the final session, on 29 March 2000, Mr. Mohamed Djemel, Chairman of the Meeting, declared the Meeting closed.

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